

Evaluation of Special Education Teachers in 2014-15

AchieveNJ, New Jersey's educator evaluation and support system, is designed to promote effective practice for all teachers. Although special education teachers employ specific instructional strategies and assessments based on the individual needs of their students, the majority of indicators of effective instruction apply to all teachers. For a general overview of AchieveNJ, please read the [Teacher Evaluation](#) section of our website, with particular attention to the [AchieveNJ Teacher Evaluation Overview](#) and [AchieveNJ Teacher Practice Overview](#). The following guidance is intended to supplement these materials, providing suggestions and examples for evaluating teachers of students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

Districts have flexibility within the evaluation system to address local needs, but the State seeks to be responsive to requests for guidance and clarification. Additionally, it is important that local district leadership and the District Evaluation Advisory Committee (DEAC) meet to identify areas related to special education teacher evaluation where local policy decisions are needed. The New Jersey Department of Education ("the Department") will continue to work with educators across the state to refine the system to best support effective instruction for students with disabilities.

Evaluating Teacher Practice

The majority of each teacher's evaluation is based on a teacher practice rating. This rating results from multiple observations throughout the school year, using a state approved instrument selected by the district. Most of these instruments include categories such as planning and preparation, instructional strategy, classroom environment/student behavior, and collegiality or professional responsibility.

Both general and special education teachers should become familiar with the evaluation instrument used in their schools. Prior to conducting evaluations, evaluators who will be observing general and special education teachers instructing students with disabilities should meet with those teachers to discuss:

- The specialized practices, modifications, and adaptations implemented with students' IEPs that demonstrate the attributes or indicators of effective practice in the district's evaluation rubrics;
- The types of evidence/artifacts of teacher practice that the teacher can provide;
- The present levels of academic achievement and functional performance of the students in each class observed;
- The roles of both teachers within the general education classroom when a special education teacher is providing in-class support in accordance with students' IEPs; and
- The assessments used to measure achievement and progress as well as the accommodations, modifications, and any alternate assessments designed for students whose progress cannot be measured by the general assessments.

Educators who teach students with disabilities should provide evidence throughout this process that demonstrates the strategies they use to differentiate instruction in their classroom. The Department encourages district leaders, principals, special education administrators, and teachers to collaborate in preparing for and conducting observations and conferences.

Evaluating Student Growth

Student Growth Objectives (SGOs)

20%¹ of the final evaluation score of all teachers is based on SGOs – specific and measurable long-term academic goals aligned to New Jersey's curriculum standards, set in the first few weeks of the school year using available student learning data, and measured using a variety of assessments. SGOs should be

¹ This weight is pending approval of related regulations by the State Board of Education.

developed to accurately and fairly measure a significant portion of an educator's work with his or her students, and must be set in consultation with the principal or supervisor. Please refer to the detailed [SGO Web Page](#) for additional information on SGO development.

- **SGO Assessments:** SGOs may be developed using a variety of assessments, including portfolios of student work, standardized tests, district-developed assessments, etc. Educators who teach students with disabilities should discuss potential assessments for their students with their principal and other administrators at the beginning of the school year and identify any necessary accommodations, modifications, or alternate assessments. Please refer to the [state assessment accommodations and modifications policy](#) for ideas. The [SGO Guidebook](#) contains additional information about measuring student progress.
- **Differences Between IEP Goals and SGOs:** IEPs may inform SGO development, but SGOs should not be the same as IEP goals, as detailed in the chart below:

IEP Goals	SGOs
Inform SGO development	Supported by IEP objectives*
Based on individualized learning needs	Based on appropriate curriculum
Represent growth in a full calendar year (e.g. October 2014 to October 2015)	Represent learning in a specific instructional time period (e.g. September to May)
Determined by IEP team	Determined by teacher and evaluator

**If, for example, an SGO addresses increasing reading comprehension level, IEP objectives might address comprehension skills that the individual student has not yet learned, but that are necessary to improve his or her reading comprehension level.*

When setting SGOs for students with IEPs, districts should also consider:

- **Differentiated Goals:** Every educator of students with disabilities should be familiar with the general education curriculum for relevant grades and courses. Ideally, the general education curriculum should include specialized methods, materials, and assessments to address the needs of all students. SGOs for students with IEPs might represent achievement of knowledge or skills at a different level of complexity or scope than that of their peers; however, educators should ensure, whenever possible, that student goals are aligned with grade level standards and objectives.
- **Collaboration:** The state requires collaboration between teachers and principals to set SGOs. In addition, other staff members involved in supporting special education students should be involved where appropriate to ensure SGOs accurately capture student starting points and necessary accommodations.

In addition to detailed examples in the [SGO Guidebook](#), the Department has provided [general examples on how to set SGOs](#). Below is an example of an SGO set by an elementary special education teacher who teaches students with disabilities in pull-out replacement Language Arts classes. Baseline data collected at the beginning of the year indicated that the teacher's students needed to focus on reading fluency.

Assessment	Target	Number of Students Who Attained The Target (15 Students Total)			
		Highly Effective	Effective	Partially Effective	Ineffective
DRA2™ second edition	Increase One Proficiency Level	At least 13	At least 11	At least 9	Fewer than 9

In addition to creating goals such as the one above, teachers should share baseline assessment data with their supervisor, along with any accommodations or modifications.

Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs)

For teachers of 4th-8th- grade Language Arts and Math, 10%² of the evaluation is based on student growth on state standardized tests. The methodology for this measure has been developed to more accurately assess growth than proficiency goals. For a more detailed description, see the [AchieveNJ SGP web page](#).

Course Roster Assignment and Student Attribution for SGPs

- Districts control how course roster data is submitted and verified; therefore, districts are responsible for ensuring their rosters accurately reflect their classroom practices. Special education teachers should speak with the appropriate administrator to ensure that student attribution and course roster identification is correct for the instruction and services they provide. Additionally, School Improvement Panels (SciPs) and/or DEACs should ensure that there is a district policy, where appropriate, for roster submission and student attribution that accurately reflects the instructional models of special education instruction and support. Considering these variations in advance will allow districts to differentiate between push-in or pull-out teachers who may only be with students for part of a class period or school week, and co-teachers or replacement class teachers who may be with a student population full-time for the entire year. For example, in a co-teaching situation, the more involved the special education teacher is in planning instruction (whole group or small group) and developing assessments, the more likely the district might be to attribute the growth of all students to both teachers.
- Districts should develop policies that clearly identify how students will be attributed across the spectrum of support provided by educators of students with IEPs. *The superintendent holds final responsibility for the district's attribution policies.* The chart below is intended to help inform such decisions; districts are not required to adopt this methodology:

Teacher Placement/ Support Model	Questions and Considerations	Course Roster/Student Attribution Suggestions
In-Class (or co-teaching) Resource and Supplementary Instruction	Is the special education teacher implementing a co-teaching model?	If the classroom employs a co-teaching model, or the in-class support teacher has been specifically assigned responsibility for the whole student population, the district should attribute all qualifying students to both the general education and special education teacher.
	Is the special education teacher only responsible for students with IEPs?	If the teacher's primary responsibility is to serve a specific population with IEPs in the general education setting, it may be appropriate to create a roster for the general education teacher with all students in the course attributed, and a separate roster of students with IEPs who will be attributed to the special education teacher.
	Is the in-class support teacher with students full-time or part-time?	If the in-class support teacher supports a general education class part-time, the district should ensure the teacher spends enough time with students for attribution. Districts should follow the intent of the proposed regulation, which states that educators must teach for at least 60% of the time from the beginning of the course to the day of the assessment, when considering attribution for such circumstances.
Pull-Out Support and Supplemental Instruction	How often and for what subject matter is the special education teacher working with students outside of class?	If students are pulled out of the general education classroom for support on Language Arts/Math, the district may consider attributing students to the pull-out support teacher in addition to the general education teacher in these areas. Districts should consider how much time that teacher spends with individual students and if this time is comparable to other teachers with attributed students.

² This weight is pending approval of related regulations by the State Board of Education.

Teacher Placement/ Support Model	Questions and Considerations	Course Roster/Student Attribution Suggestions
Pull-Out and Single Subject Replacement Resource	Is a teacher giving replacement instruction in Language Arts/Math?	If a pull-out replacement teacher provides full-time instruction for students in Language Arts/Math, the district should attribute those students to that teacher. Teachers with fewer than 20 total students will not receive an SGP score in and should set two SGOs.
Self-Contained Class	Do all students in the classroom take the state test?	In a self-contained classroom, all students who take the state assessment receive an SGP score. SGPs are not generated for students taking the Alternate Proficiency Assessment (APA). Teachers of fewer than 20 students, or of students take the APA, should set two SGOs.

Attribution of Students for SGOs

Teachers should work with their principal or supervisor to identify the students for whom they will develop SGOs, keeping in mind that those without an SGP score will set two goals. A teacher and an evaluator may decide to individualize or use preparedness groupings in an SGO, providing a more differentiated approach to goal-setting for students with a wide range of starting points who may show varying rates of progress. See the [SGO Guidebook](#) for more information on these options. The chart on Page 2 can also be used to guide thinking about teachers' target population(s) for SGO setting.

As educators and district leaders take on this work, it is important to remember that the key to student attribution and course roster verification is that the evaluation system reflect the reality of the instruction and support in a classroom. The goal of AchieveNJ is to determine the effectiveness of teachers in their current placement and to identify how educators might more effectively help all students grow, regardless of their ability level. The Department will continue to work with educators and seek feedback on attribution issues.

For More Information

Learn more and share your feedback by:

- Contacting your district leadership, DEAC, or SciP.
- Visiting the AchieveNJ website at www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ, e-mailing educatorevaluation@doe.state.nj.us; or calling the AchieveNJ Help Line at 609-777-3788.